



U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/437,296
Response to Office Action dated July 17, 2006

REMARKS

Claim 1 is pending in this application, which has been amended. No new claims have been added.

Claim 1 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Nakazawa et al. in view of Eidsmore (both previously applied).

Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

As noted in Applicants' response of April 27, 2006, the "seal portion" in Nakazawa et al. fails to be rounded so as to be in contact with the gasket only at its radial midportion, as are the ridges 71a, 72a in FIG. 1(b) of the instant application, and as recited in claim 1 of the instant application.

The Examiner has cited Eidsmore for teaching this feature.

Applicants respectfully disagree. FIG. 5 of Eidsmore shows rounded ("hemispherical") bead-like protrusions arranged on end faces 26' of coupling components 12', 14'. However, these protrusions are arranged to contact an inner portion of the gasket, and not the radial midportion, as recited in claim 1 of the instant application. The Examiner appears to ignore this distinction in his remarks. However, FIG. 5 clearly shows contact at a point other than the radial midportion.

Furthermore, FIG. 5 of Eidsmore shows the inner diameter of the gasket to be approximately equal to the diameter of the opening passageway. This is in contrast to the present invention, in which the gasket (73) has an inside diameter less than the diameter of the opening passageway, as shown in FIG. 1(b), as disclosed on page 8, lines 10-12 of the specification, and

as recited in claim 1, as originally filed, of the present invention.

Because the gasket of Eidsmore has an inner diameter which is the same as the diameter of the opening passageway, wrinkles tend to develop along the inner wall of the gasket. The extension of the gasket's inner surface into the passageway in the present invention prevents these wrinkles from appearing. (Please see Reference FIG. 2, attached hereto.) If any one of the three limitations recited at the end of claim 1 is absent, as in the cited references, either wrinkles or a dead space is generated. The present invention prevents the occurrence of both wrinkles and dead space by meeting all the requirements recited in claim 1.

In particular, it should be noted that the arrangement of Eidsmore produces dead spaces, which are not present in the claimed invention because the end faces of the cylindrical projection 71 (72) are brought into contact with the gasket 73.

Further, there is another difference between the present invention and the cited references. That is, as shown on Sheet B attached hereto, the intersection of the inner diameter of the projection of the gasket with the inner diameter of the opening passageway is not made flush with the flat face of the butted end face as in Eidsmore, while the intersection of the inner diameter of the projection of the gasket with the inner diameter of the opening passageway is made flush with the flat face of the butted end face in the present invention. Consequently, with the present invention, when the intersection contacts the gasket, the flat face also contacts the gasket, and the tightening resistance is increased, whereby one can tell when the tightening is completed, which enables the present invention to perform the appropriate tightening that does

not generate dead space and is not an excessively strong tightening.

Thus, the 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) rejection should be withdrawn.

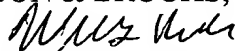
In view of the aforementioned amendments and accompanying remarks, claim 1, as amended, is in condition for allowance, which action, at an early date, is requested.

If, for any reason, it is felt that this application is not now in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact Applicants' undersigned attorney at the telephone number indicated below to arrange for an interview to expedite the disposition of this case.

In the event that this paper is not timely filed, Applicants respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. Please charge any fees for such an extension of time and any other fees which may be due with respect to this paper, to Deposit Account No. 01-2340.

Respectfully submitted,

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PATENT TRADEMARK OFFICE

Enclosures: Reference FIGS. 1-5
Reference Sheet B